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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
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FOR A/OPR/ALS R. PASCHALL AND AF/EX P POMETTO FROM AMBASSADOR ALLEN

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: AMGT ASIG APER NG
SUBJECT: Post Differential - Embassy Niamey

Ref: A) Niamey 342, B) State 70767, C) Embassy Niamey - Office of Allowances E-Mails, D) 08 Niamey 1166, E) Niger Country Information Sheet, F) Niamey 527

¶1. (U) This is an action request - see para 6.

¶2. (SBU) I am concerned that the hardship differential at Embassy Niamey decreased from 25 to 20 percent effective April 24, which I believe neither speaks to the realities of living and serving in Niger and undermines our recruitment efforts to fill vacancies at this hard-to-staff post. Based on my experience, as well as that of the Deputy Chief of Mission and the Management Officer, with a combined 35 years of experience living in Africa, conditions at Embassy Niamey clearly warrant designation as a 25 percent differential post.

¶3. (SBU) In response to the lowering of Niamey's hardship differential on April 24, 2009, from 25 to 20 percent, post submitted ref A outlining the grounds for requesting reconsideration of the differential determination. AF/EX advised post that the Office of Allowances would review the differential determination in light of updated information in Diplomatic Security's next SETL (ref B).

¶4. (SBU) Post contacted the Office of Allowances on July 9 after publication of ref B to determine the impact of the revised SETL on Embassy Niamey's differential calculation (ref C). In a July 10 e-mail response (ref C), the Office of Allowances advised post that the increase in the trans-national terrorism threat rating for Embassy Niamey from medium to high did not compensate for the 2007 decrease in the crime rating from critical to high on the Diplomatic Security SETL. The Office of Allowances advised post that as a result there was no change to the hardship differential calculation for Embassy Niamey.

¶5. (SBU) Post management has reviewed the list of differential posts, and notes that within the AF Bureau Praia, Cape Verde; Nouakchott, Mauritania; Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo; and Kigali, Rwanda all have the same or lower SETL ratings compared to Embassy Niamey and are currently designated as 25 percent hardship differential posts. Other posts, such as Accra, Ghana have ratings similar to Embassy Niamey with differences in three ratings, with Embassy Niamey having the higher rating in two of the three areas. Embassy Niamey is at a loss as to how the determination has been made to lower the differential for this isolated, arid Sahelian post. A total of eight African posts that do not have critical crime ratings also qualify for the 25 percent differential, including those previously mentioned. In fact, several of these have crime ratings lower than Embassy Niamey. Thus, the determination that Niamey is less of a hardship locale boggles the mind.

¶6. (SBU) I have directed my staff to revise and re-submit the Hardship Differential Report that initially was submitted in December 2008 to reflect post's changing circumstances. These changes will include mention of the UN official hostage takings (ref D), tourist kidnappings in January 2009 resulting in the imposition of additional travel restrictions on post personnel (ref E),

reduction of the number of airline connections to Niamey, increased social tensions and demonstrations (ref F) relating to an upcoming referendum declared unconstitutional, and elections scheduled at the local, national assembly, and presidential levels within 2009. In light of these factors, Embassy Niamey merits a recalculation of its hardship differential score and a readjustment of post's hardship differential.

¶7. (SBU) Action requested: I respectfully request a meticulous review of the information contained in the updated Hardship Differential Report and an in-depth explanation of how the differential is calculated in the event Embassy Niamey's rating is not re-set at 25 percent.

¶8. (U) I thank the Department in advance for its attention to this matter.

ALLEN